



Director Spotlight!

Showcasing the passion, talents, and hard work of Arizona school nutrition professionals.



Elizabeth Allen

Director of Food Services, Palominas Elementary School District

Hometown: Henry, Illinois

Current City of Residence: Hereford, Arizona

Favorite Childhood School Meal: Chicken Patty Sandwiches

When I was a kid, I wanted to grow up to be a: Teacher

What was your first job in food service?

I worked at Casey's General Store making pizzas.

What prompted you to start working the field of school nutrition?

As a young stay-at-home mom, I wanted to be involved in my daughter's education as much as possible. This led to a part-time job in the cafeteria where I quickly learned that I could combine my passion for working with children with my enthusiasm for nutrition and turn it into a genuine career.

Tell us about a specific project or initiative you have championed that you are proud of.

I have become a champion for our Local Wellness Policy. I helped implement and now co-lead the District Wellness Committee, and serve on each school's Student Health Advisory Council. This led us to receive the County School Health and Wellness Award which recognizes our commitment to district- and community-wide health and wellness.

Assuming time and money were not barriers, what would be your top priority as far as changes you would like to see in your school nutrition program?

Living in a rural, border community where access to food banks, soup kitchens, and other hot meals is unavailable, I would love to be able to provide every child great, homecooked, nutritious food at every meal.

What are the top three skills a school food service director should have?

The ability to always see the positive and be resilient, ability to mentor and delegate, and be creative and astute to children's ever changing needs.

What advice would you give to a younger version of yourself just starting your role as Director?

Don't try to do everything on your own, keep things in perspective, and empower your team to assist on driving towards your goals. This will breed a sense of ownership and unify your team.